

**The Missouri Statewide Council on Sex Trafficking and
Sexual Exploitation of Children**



**REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

December 31, 2023

PART I: INTRODUCTION, STATUTORY DEFINITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Introduction

Senate Bill 775, signed into law by Governor Mike Parson on June 30, 2022, established the Statewide Council on Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children [referred herein as Statewide Council]. The statute (Mo. Rev. Stat. 210.1505) directs the Statewide Council to collect data relating to sex trafficking of children and to develop best practices regarding the response to sex trafficking of children. The statute directs the Statewide Council to submit this report to the Governor and General Assembly on or before December 31, 2023. Adhering to the statutory requirements, this report includes recommendations for priority needs and actions, including statutory or regulatory changes relating to the response to sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of children and services for child victims.

The Statewide Council has identified that the term(s) “trafficking” and/or “child sex trafficking” serves as a barrier to understanding the elements of commercial sexual exploitation of children as the foundation for these terms. Therefore, the Statewide Council’s focus was to reframe the ideology of child sex trafficking in a way that focuses on the fundamentals of the terms and instead adopted the language “Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children” (CSEC). The Statewide Council acknowledges the definition of CSEC as the inducement of a minor (anyone under the age of 18) to participate in any sexual activity for money, drugs, housing, or anything of value.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children has emerged as a global, national, and local concern that demands increased education and awareness to safeguard children in the state of Missouri. Missouri is known to have heightened risk of CSEC in various regions. The federal government has been actively working to protect trafficking victims and establish evaluation criteria for human trafficking through the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA; Pub.L.106-386). The TVPA has undergone multiple reauthorizations by Congress, with the most recent in 2019, which enhanced the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, and focused on the sex trafficking of minors (Polaris Project, 2020a). In the United States, both U.S. citizens and foreign national children are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, labor trafficking, or both. The Statewide Councils focus was on CSEC, which makes up almost 96% of reported trafficking incidents in Missouri according to a report from Gateway Alliance Against Human Trafficking (2023). Despite the increased national and international attention to these issues, the general public remains relatively unaware of the existence of CSEC in the urban, suburban, and rural areas of Missouri. As recent as 2020, Missouri had the fourth highest incidence rate of human trafficking at 4.32 per 100,000 people (Polaris, 2023a). Various interstate highways in Missouri provide and facilitate a higher occurrence of CSEC, and a general lack of awareness about what commercial sexual of exploitation is and the idea that it always occurs somewhere else results in the failure to identify child victims of human trafficking. Few crimes are as reprehensible as CSEC, and they present significant challenges for communities regarding recognition and response.

Statutory Definitions and Requirements

Citation: Ann. Stat. §§ 566.210; 566.211

A person commits the offense of 'sexual trafficking of a child' in the first degree if he or she knowingly does any of the following:

- Recruits, entices, harbors, transports, provides, or obtains by any means, including but not limited to through the use of force, abduction, coercion, fraud, deception, blackmail, or causing or threatening to cause financial harm, a person younger than age 12 to participate in a commercial sex act, a sexual performance, or the production of explicit sexual material, or benefits financially or by receiving anything of value from participation in such activities
- Causes a person younger than age 12 to engage in a commercial sex act, a sexual performance, or the production of explicit sexual material

It shall not be a defense that the defendant believed that the person was age 12 or older.

A person commits the offense of 'sexual trafficking of a child' in the second degree if he or she knowingly does any of the following:

- Recruits, entices, harbors, transports, provides, or obtains by any means, including but not limited to through the use of force, abduction, coercion, fraud, deception, blackmail, or causing or threatening to cause financial harm, a person younger than age 18 to participate in a commercial sex act, a sexual performance, or the production of explicit sexual material, or benefits financially or by receiving anything of value from participation in such activities
- Causes a person younger than age 18 to engage in a commercial sex act, a sexual performance, or the production of explicit sexual material

It shall not be a defense that the defendant believed that the person was age 18 or older.

573.023. Sexual exploitation of a minor — penalties. — 1. A person commits the offense of sexual exploitation of a minor if such person knowingly or recklessly photographs, films, videotapes, produces or otherwise creates obscene material with a minor or child pornography.

2. The offense of sexual exploitation of a minor is a class B felony unless the minor is a child, in which case it is a class A felony.

573.024. Enabling sexual exploitation of a minor, offense of — penalty. — 1. A person commits the offense of enabling sexual exploitation of a minor if such person acting with criminal negligence permits or allows any violation of section [566.210](#), [566.211](#), [573.020](#), [573.023](#), [573.025](#), [573.030](#), [573.035](#), [573.200](#), or [573.205](#).

2. The offense of enabling sexual exploitation of a minor is a class E felony for the first offense and a class C felony for a second or subsequent offense.

3. If the person guilty of the offense of enabling sexual exploitation of a minor is an owner of a business or the owner's agent and the business provided the location or locations for such exploitation, the business location or locations shall be required to close for up to one year for

the first offense, and the length of time shall be determined by the court. For a second offense, such business location or locations shall permanently close. As used in this section, **"business"** shall include, but is not limited to, a hotel or massage parlor and **"owner's agent"** shall include any person empowered to manage the owner's business location or locations.

Responding to Child Victims of Human Trafficking – State Agency Responsibilities

210.1500 Suspected victims of sex trafficking, law enforcement duties — division duties — procedure. — 1. When a child is located by a police officer or law enforcement official and there is reasonable cause to suspect the child may be a victim of sex trafficking or severe forms of trafficking as those terms are defined under 22 U.S.C. Section 7102, the police officer or law enforcement official shall immediately cause a report to be made to the Children's Division in accordance with section [210.115](#). Upon receipt of a report by the Children's Division and if the Children's Division determines that the report merits an investigation, the reporting official and the Children's Division shall ensure the immediate safety of the child and shall coinvestigate the complaint to its conclusion.

2. If the police officer or law enforcement official has reasonable cause to believe that the child is in imminent danger of suffering serious physical harm or a threat to life as a result of abuse or neglect due to sex trafficking or sexual exploitation and such officer or official has reasonable cause to believe the harm or threat to life may occur before a juvenile court is able to issue a temporary protective custody order or before a juvenile officer is able to take the child into protective custody, the police officer or law enforcement official may take or retain temporary protective custody of the child without the consent of the child's parent or parents, guardian, or any other person legally responsible for the child's care, as provided under section [210.125](#).

3. If the child is already under the jurisdiction of the court under paragraph (a) of subdivision (1) of subsection 1 of section [211.031](#) and in the legal custody of the Children's Division, the police officer or law enforcement official, along with the Children's Division, shall secure placement for the child in the least restrictive setting in order to ensure the safety of the child from further sex trafficking or severe forms of trafficking.

4. The Children's Division and the reporting officer or official shall ensure a referral is made to the child advocacy center for a forensic interview and an evaluation, as necessary to ensure the medical safety of the child, by a SAFE CARE provider as defined under section [334.950](#). The child shall be assessed utilizing a validated screening tool specific to sex trafficking to ensure the appropriate resources are secured for the treatment of the child.

5. For purposes of this section, multidisciplinary teams shall be used when conducting an investigation. Multidisciplinary teams shall be used in providing protective or preventive social services, including the services of law enforcement upon the request by the department of social services, a liaison of the local public school, the juvenile officer, the juvenile court, and other agencies, both public and private, to secure appropriate services to meet the needs of the child.

More on State Agency Responsibilities

Citation: Ann. Stat. § 566.223 – As soon as possible after a first encounter with a person who reasonably appears to a law enforcement agency to be a victim of trafficking as defined in § 566.200, that agency or office shall notify the Department of Social Services and, where applicable, juvenile justice authorities that the person may be a victim of trafficking, in order that such agencies may determine whether the person may be eligible for State or Federal services, programs, or assistance.

Training Requirement

Citation: Ann. Stat. § 566.223 – The Department of Public Safety is authorized to establish procedures for identifying victims of trafficking. The department may establish training programs as well as standard protocols for appropriate agencies to educate officials and employees on State statutes and Federal laws regulating human trafficking and with the identification and assistance of victims of human trafficking. Such agencies may include, but are not limited to, State employees and contractors, including the Children’s Division of the Department of Social Services, juvenile courts, State law enforcement agencies, health-care professionals, and runaway and homeless youth shelter administrators.

Diversion from Prosecution

Citation: Ann. Stat. § 566.223 – It is an affirmative defense for the offense of prostitution under § 567.020 that the defendant engaged in the conduct charged to constitute an offense because he or she was coerced to do so by the use of, or threatened use of, unlawful physical force upon himself or herself or a third person, which force or threatened force a person of reasonable firmness in his or her situation would have been unable to resist.

Services and Supports for Victims

Citation: Ann. Stat. § 566.223 – The Department of Social Services may coordinate with relevant State, Federal, and local agencies to evaluate appropriate services for victims of trafficking. State agencies may implement programs and enter into contracts with nonprofit agencies, domestic and sexual violence shelters, and other nongovernment organizations to provide services to confirmed victims of trafficking, insofar as funds are available for that purpose. Such services may include, but are not limited to, case management, emergency temporary housing, health care, mental health counseling, alcohol and drug addiction screening and treatment, language interpretation and translation services, English-language instruction, job training, and placement assistance.

PART II: SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

For many individuals, comprehending the reality of CSEC in their own community is difficult, let alone addressing it. Yet, numerous child victims of human trafficking are enrolled in the American school system. Educators and various community stakeholders who interact with young people must recognize the reality of these crimes and their severe impact and be spurred to take action. No community—urban, rural, or suburban—school, socioeconomic group, or student demographic is immune to child trafficking or exploitation (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools, USDE, OSS, 2021). Schools must serve as safe havens for students, particularly for those whose lives are characterized by instability and

lack of safety or security (USDE, OSS, 2021). In such cases, school personnel are uniquely positioned to identify and report suspected cases, as well as connect students with necessary services— actions that can prevent trafficking and potentially save lives. Every member of the school community, including administrators, teachers, bus drivers, maintenance personnel, food service staff, resource officers, and other individuals focused on youth, have the potential to advocate for child victims of human trafficking. However, to do so, they must first acquire knowledge of the vulnerabilities of this crime such as, its indicators and how to respond when a youth appears to be a victim.

Several researchers have identified statewide knowledge gaps concerning sex trafficking in particular (Koelger, et al., 2020, and Preble et al., 2020), making education a priority. Although school personnel and community stakeholders play a crucial role, they cannot, and should not, tackle these complex issues alone. When the U.S. government developed the TVPA, they outlined the three primary approaches, known as the 3Ps, to address HT (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools, 2021): protection, prevention, and prosecution. Subsequently, the U.S. government added a fourth P, partnership. Effectively responding to child trafficking necessitates increased awareness and a well-defined course of action, supported by collaboration among child protective services, law enforcement, social services, community-based service providers, and the judicial system.

Minor sex trafficking can be defined as when a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person is induced to perform such an act has not yet reached 18 years of age" (Cornell Law School, n.d.). Commercial sexual exploitation of Children (CSEC) similarly entails compelling individuals under 18 to engage in commercial sex acts against their will. A commercial sex act is defined as "any sex act for which anything of value is given to or received by any person" (Cornell Law School, n.d.). It is crucial to highlight that the children involved in this exploitation are **victims**. Traffickers employ deception, manipulation, and physical force to compel their victims to participate in commercial sex acts, employing physical, emotional, and psychological abuse to keep them ensnared. It is common for traffickers to subject their victims to beatings, rape, or torture, while some may resort to using drugs and alcohol to maintain control over them.

Sex trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation, as a criminal enterprise, generates billions of dollars, impacting approximately 24.9 million individuals globally. According to U.S. law, human trafficking involves using force, fraud, or coercion to compel individuals into engaging in commercial sex acts, or services against their will (Polaris, 2023b). However, in the case of minors (individuals under 18 years of age) involved in commercial sex, any inducement is considered sex trafficking without exceptions. In Missouri, 80% of service providers (n=62) primarily assist survivors of sex trafficking across various support service categories, while an additional 16% work with survivors of both sex and labor trafficking (n=13; Nichols et al., 2019), highlighting its prevalence.

Child sex trafficking victims (those experiencing commercial sexual exploitation children, CSEC) often go unrecognized and may even face arrest and incarceration. These children confront severe dangers from traffickers, their associates, and customers. Their experiences in the treacherous environment harden them as they strive to survive. Moreover, they frequently

suffer from short-term and long-term psychological effects, including depression, self-hatred, and feelings of hopelessness. Additionally, sex trafficking inflicts devastating consequences on minors, including enduring physical and psychological trauma, contracting sexually transmitted diseases/infections, developing drug addictions, experiencing unwanted pregnancies, suffering from malnutrition, facing social ostracism, and even encountering death. These child victims require specialized services, which are often scarce, given their often-present illnesses, drug dependencies, physical and sexual trauma, lack of supportive family and community ties, and complete dependence—both physically and psychologically—on their abusers (Fedina, et al., 2019).

The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) encompasses a range of crimes and activities involving the sexual abuse or exploitation of a child for the financial gain of any individual or in exchange for anything of value. This can involve the exchange of money, goods, or services for engaging in sexual activities, child pornography (child sexually abusive materials), or related practices (USDE, OSS, 2021). CSEC can take various forms, such as child prostitution, child pornography, and child sex tourism. It represents a grave violation of human rights and is universally condemned. This also includes the aspect of youth engaging in survival sex. Some child sex trafficking victims, such as those engaging in “survival sex” (commercial sex engaged in by the child who sees it as the only means to find money for food or shelter), may interact directly and exclusively with the person providing items of value to the child in exchange for sexual acts. Local research indicates that some kids move from shelter to shelter until their time runs out and then engage in survival sex to support themselves when they do not have access to shelter (Nichols, et al., 2019). On the other hand, child sex trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, and harboring of a child for the purpose of sexually exploiting them. In other words, child sex trafficking is the process of preparing children for sexual abuse, while CSEC encompasses the actual sexual abuse in all its manifestations). Although each victim's experience is unique, they all share a common thread due to the nature of the crime. Trafficking victims live under the control of their traffickers, enduring constant fear, abuse, and the denial of their fundamental human rights.

Dispelling Myths: Unveiling the Truth about Human Trafficking

The general understanding of trafficking encounters often aligns with what is depicted in televised programs and motion pictures. However, trafficking depicted in movies and TV shows and in popular media doesn't line up with reality. It is imperative to acknowledge that these sensationalized narratives involving forcible abductions are uncommon in reality and that other types of commercial sexual exploitation are more common. The compilation of myths and realities below serves as a valuable tool to enlighten both younger individuals and members of the community.

See following table:

Myth	Reality
1. Trafficking involves traveling, transporting, or moving a person across borders.	► Human trafficking is distinct from smuggling, two terms that are frequently conflated. Contrary to common misconception, trafficking does not

	necessarily involve crossing borders. In fact, many cases involve the trafficking and exploitation of children within the confines of their own homes.
2. Traffickers target victims they don't know.	► Traffickers often target individuals who are already vulnerable, including those within their social circles. Friends, family members, romantic partners, or any individuals connected to potential victims may become targets of traffickers to establish initial contact.
3. Only girls and women are victims of human trafficking	► Boys and men are susceptible to becoming victims of human trafficking, albeit with a much lower likelihood of detection and reporting, due to enhanced barrier to detection and reporting. Youth of all genders are vulnerable to sex trafficking. In National Statistics from 2007-2021 89% of the trafficked individuals were female and 93% of those were sexually exploited.
4. All human trafficking involves sex or prostitution.	► Human trafficking can take on various forms but the great majority involves commercial sexual exploitation.
5. People being trafficked are physically unable to leave or held against their will.	► While physical force may be employed, trafficking can also occur through threats, coercion, or deception. Victims of trafficking may be controlled through drug addiction, abusive relationships, shame, manipulation, financial dependence, or isolation from their loved ones. Victims may outwardly appear to exercise free will but are often under the psychological control of their traffickers, instilled through fear and other manipulative tactics. They may not even recognize themselves as victims.
6. Trafficking primarily occurs in developing countries	Trafficking is a global phenomenon, although the prevalent forms of trafficking may vary by country. The United States is among the countries with high incidences of sex trafficking, with exploitation occurring in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Although labor trafficking exists in the U.S., it occurs at lower rates compared to many developing countries.
7. When someone is trafficked, they are typically kidnapped.	► The process of being trafficked can be either swift or gradual, contingent upon

	various factors. The trafficker may spend days, weeks, months, or years grooming and manipulating their victims before exploitation occurs.
8. Youth experiencing human trafficking do not go to school.	► Even youths who attend school and actively engage in community activities remain at risk of falling victim to trafficking. It is common for victims to continue their regular school attendance and participation in activities even while experiencing trafficking.
9. Only undocumented individuals are labor trafficking victims.	► Youth of every race, gender, and immigration status are vulnerable to being coerced into working for little or no compensation. However, vulnerable individuals in the country illegally are at a higher risk of both labor and sexual exploitation or both.
10. Labor and sex trafficking doesn't occur in legal or legitimate business settings	► Labor trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation permeates a wide range of businesses and settings, spanning legal and illegal enterprises.

*Adapted from Human Trafficking in Missouri Schools

PART III: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Currently, there is not a unified state-wide system in Missouri to collect data and report on analysis of gathered information. Thus, below information is provided from different resources:

1. National Human Trafficking Hotline

Table 1. Missouri Signals Received from the National Human Trafficking Hotline – 2007 through 2021		
Year(s)	Signals Received from Hotline	Signals Received from Victims/ Survivors
2007-2014*	55,102	7,013
2015	26,863	4,807
2016	32,203	5,496
2017	36,068	5,824
2018	43,751	8,704
2019	51,921	11,551
2020	56,127	14,844
2021	51,073	13,277
Total	353,108	71,516

Statewide Council on Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children

Change from 2015 to 2021 is 90.1% increase in total volumes of signals received (phone, text, chat) but the increase in signals from victims and survivors was 176.2%

Missouri was the 7th highest in number of signal calls to the National Hotline with 1,103 signals received and 355 were from victims of those signals.

240 cases were identified of trafficking victims with 327 total victims. (Multiple victims identified per trafficking incident) of those cases 90% were from Sex trafficking. With 91% of the victims being female.

2. Location of Trafficking

Table 2 -Venues for Sex Trafficking in MO 2021	
Pornography	47
Hotel/Motel-Based	19
Online Ad Venue Unknown	6
Residence-Based Commercial Sex	6
Street-Based	5
Escort/Delivery Service	4
Illicit Massage/Spa Business	3
Other	120

Department of Public Safety: Missouri State Highway Patrol¹

¹ - Missouri State Highway Patrol, Criminal Justice Information Services
<https://showmecrime.mo.gov/CrimeReporting/CrimeReportingTOPS.html>

3. NIBRS -Data

NIBRS Number of Victims by Age by Gender by County				
Measures: Number of Victims				
Data source: MO_SS, Victim Data				
Victim Age under 18				
Offence type: Human Trafficking, Commercial Sex Acts	FY 2023	FY 2022	FY 2021	Total
Jurisdiction by Geography				
Jackson County	5	4	2	11
Buchanan County	4	2	6	12
St Louis County	3	5	3	11
Carroll County	1	0	0	1
Ozark County	1	0	0	1
St Charles County	1	1	3	5
St Louis Metropolitan PD	1	0	1	2
Jasper County	0	2	0	2
Oregon County	0	2	0	2
Caldwell County	0	1	2	3
Moniteau County	0	1	0	1
New Madrid County	0	1	0	1
St Francois County	0	1	1	2
Taney County	0	1	0	1
Warren County	0	1	1	2
Dunklin County	0	0	2	2
Greene County	0	0	2	2
Boone County	0	0	1	1
Butler County	0	0	1	1
DeKalb County	0	0	1	1
Webster County	0	0	1	1
Statewide Agencies	0	0	1	1
Missouri Total	16	22	28	66

4. Eastern Missouri Human Trafficking Task Force

Area of responsibility that spans the Eastern District of Missouri, including 49 counties.

Eastern Division: Crawford, Dent, Franklin, Gasconade, Jefferson, Lincoln, Maries, Phelps, St. Charles, St. Francois, St. Louis City, St. Louis County, Warren, and Washington.

Northern Division includes: Adair, Audrain, Chariton, Clark, Knox, Lewis, Linn, Macon, Marion, Monroe, Montgomery, Pike, Ralls, Randolph, Schuyler, Scotland, and Shelby.

Southern Division includes: Bollinger, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Dunklin, Iron, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Perry, Reynolds, Ripley, Scott, Shannon, Ste. Genevieve, Stoddard, and Wayne.

*Note – Data from western district of Missouri was not available

Human Trafficking Location Type - Victims in Eastern Missouri - 2020-2022	
Human Trafficking, Commercial Sex Acts	105
Residence/Home	59
Hotel/Motel/Etc.	18
Cyberspace	10
Other/Unknown	6
Highway/Road/Alley/Street/Sidewalk	4
Parking/Drop Lot/Garage	3
Government/Public Building	1
Jail/Prison/Penitentiary/Corrections Facility	1
Park/Playground	1
Restaurant	1
School – Elementary/Secondary	1
Human Trafficking, Labor Trafficking	7
Residence/Home	4
Other/Unknown	2
Government/Public Building	1
Total	112

Human Trafficking – Number of Cases per County – 2020-2022	
County	#
Sex Trafficking	105
Boone County	12
Buchanan County	18
Butler County	2
Caldwell County	2
Camden County	2
Cape Girardeau County	1
Cole County	1
DeKalb County	1
Dent County	1
Dunklin County	1
Greene County	5
Jackson County	12
Jasper County	1
Johnson County	2
Lawrence County	2
McDonald County	2
Missouri State Hwy Patrol	1
Moniteau County	1
New Madrid County	1
Oregon County	1
Platte County	1
Saline County	1
St Charles County	8
St Francois County	2
St Louis County	17
St Louis Metro PD	2
Statewide Agencies	1
Taney County	1
Warren County	2
Webster County	1
Labor Trafficking	7
Boone County	1
Jackson County	5
Randolph County	1
Total	112

5. Department of Social Services – Children’s Division

The Missouri Department of Social Services, Children’s Division reported the following data from October 2017 to September 2023:

- Number of alleged human trafficking reports received - 1,446
- Number of alleged human trafficking victims - 1,619
- Number of substantiated (by a Preponderance of Evidence) human trafficking reports - 131
- Number of substantiated (by a Preponderance of Evidence) human trafficking victims - 144

In 2021, Children’s Division began tracking if the youth was in Children’s Division care or in the care of their parent/guardian. From 2021 to 2023, there were 77 confirmed, substantiated victims of human trafficking.

Of these 77 victims –

- 2 were youth in Children’s Division custody on run status (missing youth)
- 7 were youth in Children’s Division custody that disclosed human trafficking prior to entering custody.
- 1 youth was in Children’s Division custody and disclosed human trafficking while in custody.
- 12 youth were placed in Children’s Division custody due to the allegations/finding of human trafficking.
- 55 youth were not in Children’s Division custody at the time the trafficking occurred and were not placed in custody due to the finding of human trafficking. These youth remained with their parent/guardian.

6. Child Advocacy Center of Northeast Missouri

Each year, the number of children who have disclosed some kind of sexual exploitation or trafficking at Child Advocacy Center of Northeast Missouri has increased. This is in large part due to the implementation of a designated CSEC Program which began in 2021. This position has been instrumental in bringing awareness about CSEC cases, how to identify and best practice responses to children who have been victims of exploitation or human trafficking. In 2022, 15% of all forensic interviews involved a CSEC crime, compared to 13% in 2021, and just 3% in 2020. In fact, the total number of forensic interviews involving a CSEC crime increase from 11 in 2019 to 168 in 2022. These numbers will continue to increase as we continue to understand the complexities of CSEC and work to identify these victims.

7. Data from the Missouri Office of State Courts Administrator

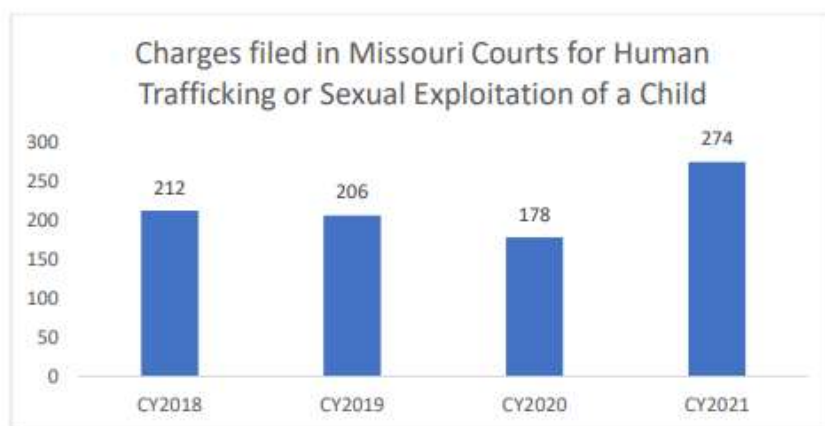


Figure 1: Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of a Child Charges filed in Missouri Courts, 2018-2021. Source: OSCA.

The graph below shows offenses and charges (arrests) for HT-CSA and HT-IS from 2017 through 2021. However, since 2020, MSHP no longer included data of *offenses* for Commercial Sex Acts (HT-CSA) and Involuntary Servitude (HT-IS), so those 2020 and 2021 are limited to *charges* only.

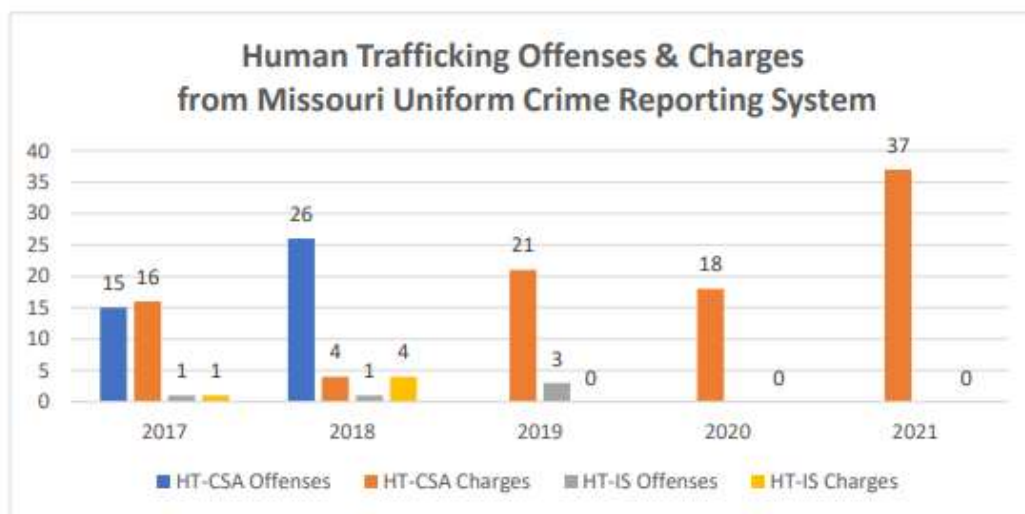


Figure 2: Offenses and Charges for Human Trafficking - Commercial Sex Acts and Human Trafficking – Involuntary Servitude, 2017-2021. Source: MSHP.

PART IV: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE STATEWIDE COUNCIL

Budget Changes and Investments to Protect Against CSEC

- Added to the DSS budget was \$254,204. The Children's Division created the At-Risk Youth Program Coordinator within the Sex Trafficking Prevention Unit, along with two support staff positions. The Program Coordinator position is a senior leadership role responsible for improving statewide efforts to prevent and respond to the needs of at-risk youth in foster care.
- The overall Child Advocacy Center core budget was increased \$900,000 for the purpose of maintaining a robust and healthy CAC network capable of responding to Child Sexual Abuse and Trafficking.
- Added \$500,000 to the Children's Division budget to establish a Child Advocacy Center Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CAC-CSEC) program to provide regional coverage and statewide strategy development of a comprehensive CSEC model for all regions of the state. The funding will be distributed by Missouri KidsFirst, the accredited state association of CACs to the Child Advocacy Center of Northeast Missouri (CAC NEMO)'s established CSEC program and three additional CACs.

DSS-Children's Division CSEC Program

The Statewide Council proposed the development of a CSEC program within the Children's Division that would include a leadership position and two support staff positions. The proposal and budget for the positions were approved. The Children's Division created the At-Risk Youth Program Coordinator overseeing the Sex Trafficking Prevention Unit, along with two support staff positions. The Program Coordinator position is a senior leadership role responsible for improving statewide efforts to prevent and respond to the needs of at-risk youth in foster care. The coordinator will lead a team of Program Development Specialists to identify, prevent and respond to missing youth and youth who are at risk for or have been trafficked. This individual will actively participate on committees, councils, policy groups and other work groups with allied organizations on the state level to build and maintain evidence informed approaches to the prevention of and response to missing/runaway youth, CSEC, and other forms of human trafficking. This position will lead cross-system collaboration efforts with **a focus on collecting and providing a centralized data repository surrounding CSEC and will identify data around missing youth and runaways.** This position will coordinate and provide technical assistance and skill development opportunities for staff, partnering with external organizations and subject matter experts. Broad goals include:

- To develop policies, practices and data collection mechanisms to help identify youth who have a heightened risk of going missing from care and being trafficked.
- To develop and implement interventions to reduce the risk factors that contribute to missing youth and human trafficking.
- To develop and implement a more effective mechanism to ensure requirements are met when youth are identified as missing, when they are located and returned to care, and when trafficking is suspected or known.

Identifying the Problem with Data Collection

Data collection surrounding CSEC and trafficking has been difficult to collect due to several factors. With minors there is the issue of confidentiality of names and data because of age. Also law enforcement, NGO's, DSS, Children's Division, Hotlines etc... are not mandated to share data and therefore a common repository of data is not currently available. There is also the possibility of duplicate reporting from one organization to another. Also the issue of awareness and lack of education about how to differentiate between CSEC and sex trafficking of children, and smuggling or transportation has led to underreporting of actual cases.

CSEC and CAC's

With growing awareness and understanding of the complex problem of CSEC, Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) and their Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) partners nationally have been expanding their capacity to identify and respond to the needs of children and youth who may be at risk of, or are being recruited and exploited, including necessary protections and referrals to specialized services. To do so requires the development and implementation of relevant training, policies, and protocols that guide coordinated interdisciplinary screening, investigations and service delivery.

In 2023, the Statewide Council recommended, and the General Assembly approved, an appropriation for \$500,000 for services and programs administered through the statewide association of Regional Child Assessment Centers, Missouri KidsFirst, aimed at preventing and combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children. This appropriation will be used to develop a statewide CAC CSEC Program to be delivered as a partnership between Missouri KidsFirst and up to four Child Advocacy Centers, including the Child Advocacy Center of Northeast Missouri who currently has an active CSEC program and will be working with Missouri KidsFirst and all CSEC sites to get the initiative off the ground. This initiative will build the capacity of CACs across the state to develop a coordinated response in CSEC cases.

Goals of the CAC CSEC program include:

- Building CAC core competencies in service provision to victims of CSEC including:
 - The development of written protocols/guidelines, policies and procedures for a coordinated CAC/MDT response specific to CSEC cases;
 - Specialized Forensic Interview (FI) training;
 - Development of and training on screening and identification tools;
 - Coalition building to provide a coordinated CSEC response for local community organizations and groups.

Bringing All Parties Together

The Statewide Council served to bring together many agencies from government and the private sector for ongoing and productive discussions about commercial sexual exploitation of children. Law enforcement, judiciary, DSS, Children's Division, DPS, AGO and elected officials as well as NGO's such as CAC's and others in the private sector who work with the victims all worked

together to bring consensus and clarity to issues that must be addressed to minimize CSEC and protect our children.

This broad representation of the many governmental agencies, NGO's, law enforcement, etc...must be included to break down barriers to help with communication between the groups so as to facility a healthy, victim-centered approach to CSEC. We must also continue to work with our Federal partners as well and perhaps representation from Federal agencies on the Attorney General's Statewide Task Force should be considered.

PART V: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STATEWIDE COUNCIL

1. Continuation of DSS-Children's Division CSEC Program

The Statewide Council believes that we must continue to fund at the state level a position in Children's Division established at the instigation of the Statewide Council in the 2024 Missouri Budget for DSS. This position of an At-Risk Youth Program Coordinator in the Sex Trafficking Prevention Unit is a senior leadership position. Two positions were created below this position whose job it is to make sure that when the Children's Division of DSS is contacted with someone expected of being trafficked or otherwise commercially sexually exploited that the victim receives the help and that all state guidance is carried out for the benefit of the victim and the prosecution of the offender.

2. Continue Budget Increase for CACs which supports the core services of 15 regional CACs across the state

In 2024 MO Budget the line item for CAC's was increased \$900,000 to help to stabilize funding for these essential organizations in the battle against child sexual abuse, including CSEC. With the unstable amount of funding for victim-serving organizations from Federal Victims of Crime Act funding it seems essential to continue this amount of funding to provide for these organizations.

3. Maintain Funding for Regional CSEC Plan Across Missouri Description, Rational, Amount to Continue

To promote the use of best practices in the investigation and treatment of CSEC cases in the child welfare and criminal justice systems, the Statewide Council recommends continuing financial support for the CAC-CESC statewide program that is launching in 2024. The program will be housed at four sites to build the capacity of Missouri CACs to develop a coordinated multi-disciplinary team response to CSEC, beginning at the time of initial reports and continuing through all stages of investigations and interventions.

4. Education for Law Enforcement, Healthcare, and Education Professionals

Consider legislation to require continuing education in the areas of child abuse, domestic violence and human trafficking, for all professionals who may encounter victims of child abuse, domestic violence and human trafficking. Those professionals include, but are not limited to:

health professionals, law enforcement, judicial and educational personnel, as well as staff at establishments where human trafficking may be identified as recognized in awareness campaign insignia, such as <https://dps.mo.gov/human-trafficking/> .

5. Awareness Campaign

An awareness campaign across the state with PSA's explaining the characteristics of CSEC and how to prevent our children from becoming victims.

6. Legislative Proposal for AG's Statewide Council (anti-trafficking task force)

With the dissolution of the Statewide Council in December 2023 there will be a void in the connection between organizations such as law enforcement, DSS, Juvenile Justice, CAC's etc.. that has been provided by this Statewide Council. It is our recommendation that a task force under the auspices of the AG's office be instituted along similar lines of this Statewide Council continue and extend the work that has been done and provide continuity and connection between the stakeholder and various groups as provided by the current Statewide Council.

Proposal for the Establishment of the Counter Human Trafficking Task Force in Statute
This bill creates the "Statewide Council Against Adult Trafficking and the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children."

This proposed council will be created under the office of the Attorney General of Missouri. It is created to coordinate the statewide effort against trafficking of adults and especially children within the State of Missouri.

The proposed council will consist of the following members, including:

- (1) Attorney General or his designee; (will serve as Chair of the Council)
- (2) The Director of the Children's Division or his or her designee;
- (3) The Director of Public Safety or his or her designee;
- (4) The Director of the Department of Mental Health or his or her designee;
- (5) The Director of the Office of Prosecution Services or his or her designee;
- (6) The Superintendent of the Missouri State Highway Patrol or his or her designee;
- (7) The Executive Director of the statewide network of child advocacy organizations or his or her designee;
- (8) The Executive Director of the statewide coalition against domestic and sexual violence or his or her designee;
- (9) The Executive Director of the Missouri Juvenile Justice Association or his or her designee;
- (10) The Director of the Attorney General's human trafficking task force or his or her designee;
- (11) Two representatives from agencies providing services to victims of child sex trafficking and sexual exploitation;
- (12) Two State Representatives and Two State Senators appointed by the Speaker of the House or the President of the Senate;
- (13) A member of the Judiciary, appointed by the Missouri Supreme Court;
- (14) The commissioner of DESE or a designee;
- (15) A designee from the Governor's Office;

- (16) Two HT survivors identified by CAC's willing to serve on Council;
- (17) At least one federal agency tasked with anti-human trafficking efforts, and any state or local government entity deemed necessary by the AG; and,
- (18) Any other nongovernmental organization deemed necessary by the AG.

A quorum will be constituted by a majority of the AG's Statewide Council. The AG's Statewide Council can create sub groups to look at specific issues and should meet at least quarterly. It shall be created within one month of the passage of the bill. A fund will be created and held by the Treasurer of Missouri creating the Anti-trafficking Fund which will be appropriated by the legislature to pay for the position of the Executive Director of the Statewide Council Against Adult Trafficking and the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and ongoing grants to be used for education and awareness and anti-trafficking efforts throughout the state.

7. Other Legislative Recommendations from the Statewide Council

- Change "Child Pornography" to "Child Sexual Abuse Materials" (CSAM) throughout statute. This change in wording makes it clear that minors cannot "make" pornography which implies consent but that the material is sexual abuse of a minor.
- 566.211 Modifies language to qualify as a life sentence any trafficking related offense committed by a parent or guardian of the victim.
- 566.218 Restitution - Modifies language allow for the seizure of personal and real property to go to provide restitution for the victims of sex trafficking (CSEC).
- Increase the statute of limitation for victims of sexual abuse/trafficking suing their perpetrators.
- Modify the hearsay evidence exemption to protect all children under age of 18.

8. Ideas for further development and future implementation.

1. Consider legislation to remove barriers to allow for faster identification of the IP address of potential perpetrators when a person of interest is identified, in order to allow for apprehension of that perpetrator prior to their departure from that location.
2. Pursue the idea that it could be beneficial if the Attorney General for the State of Missouri had concurrent jurisdiction throughout the state, along with prosecuting attorney and Circuit attorney within their respective jurisdictions, to enforce any provision of section 566.200-566.218. If the AG finds evidence of a violation or any other provision of Chapter 566 or 577 or any other criminal statute the AG shall have concurrent jurisdiction in such offenses.
3. DSS adopting further training for those who answer the State hotline and making sure that those calls are advanced to the appropriate locations and how they respond to trafficking and CSEC cases.

4. Recommend that OSCA provides availability of training in child abuse and domestic violence for Guardians ad Litem appertain to their required three hours of annual training.

PART VI: HOW TO REPORT CSEC

REMEMBER: Commercial sexually exploited children have experienced significant trauma and harm. Victims may be unable or are prevented from getting help due to existing vulnerabilities. It is important to treat the victims with care and respect and get immediate professional help to ensure a victim-centered and trauma-informed response (DHS, 2022). If human trafficking is observed or suspected from a distance, the details provided in a tip can be crucial to locating the trafficker and victim(s). Be observant and try to collect as much information as possible about the situation and people, like:

- Approximate ages and the number of individuals involved
- Details about their physical appearances (hair and eye color, ethnicity, prominent facial features, body type, tattoos, etc.)
- Travel details (where they are going or coming from)
- Details about their name, address, etc.
- Nicknames or gang-related affiliations being used
- Vehicle information (color, make, model, license plate, etc.)

In cases of **immediate danger** call **911** for local law enforcement first. Do not at any time attempt to confront a suspected trafficker directly or alert the youth to your suspicions. Your safety and that of the individual is important. After calling 911, call **Missouri's Child Abuse and Neglect (CA/N) Hotline telephone number (1-800-392-3738 or 1-844-CAN-TELL)**.

In cases *not* involving immediate danger call **Missouri's Child Abuse and Neglect (CA/N) Hotline telephone number (1-800-392-3738 or 1-844-CAN-TELL)**. The online platform for reporting CSEC in Missouri may be reached at <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/keeping-kids-safe/can.htm>.

ALWAYS report to the Missouri CA/N hotline; however, the following resources for reporting are available:

- ⇒ Missouri State Highway Patrol's Courage2Report telephone number 1-866-748-7047 or text "C2R" to 738477. The online platform for reporting CSEC to Courage2Report may be reached at <https://www.mshp.dps.missouri.gov/MSHPWeb/Courage2ReportMO/index.html>.
- ⇒ Missouri Office of Homeland Security, in coordination with the three Missouri Fusion Centers' See Something Say Something Cyber Form which may be accessed at P3tips.com or <https://www.p3tips.com/TipForm.aspx?ID=2600&TemplateID=129>.
- ⇒ National Human Trafficking Hotline through the Polaris Project telephone number 1-888-373-7888 or text HELP or INFO to (233733). The online platform for reporting CSEC to the Polaris Project may be reached at www.humantraffickinghotline.org.

Statewide Council on Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children

- ⇒ National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) telephone number 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678). The online platform for reporting CSEC to NCMEC may be reached at <https://report.cybertip.org/>.
- ⇒ Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) telephone number 1-866-347-2423. The online platform for reporting CSEC to HSI may be reached at www.ice.gov/tips.

Anti-Human Trafficking Contacts in Missouri

Eastern District of MO Human Trafficking Task Force

<https://www.stoptraffickingmo.org/>

Area of responsibility that spans the Eastern District of Missouri, including 49 counties.

Eastern Division: Crawford, Dent, Franklin, Gasconade, Jefferson, Lincoln, Maries, Phelps, St. Charles, St. Francois, St. Louis City, St. Louis County, Warren, Washington, Adair, Audrain, Chariton, Clark, Knox, Lewis, Linn, Macon, Marion, Monroe, Montgomery, Pike, Ralls, Randolph, Schuyler, Scotland, Shelby, Bollinger, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Dunklin, Iron, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Perry, Reynolds, Ripley, Scott, Shannon, Ste. Genevieve, Stoddard, and Wayne.

Western District of Missouri Human Trafficking Rescue Project

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdmo/human-trafficking-rescue-project#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20Attorney's%20Office%20for,and%20local%20law%20enforcement%20agencies>.

Area of responsibility that spans the Western District of Missouri, including 45 counties.

Western Division includes: Adair, Andrew, Atchison, Bates, Benton, Boone, Buchanan, Caldwell, Callaway, Carroll, Cass, Chariton, Clay, Clinton, Cole, Cooper, Daviess, DeKalb, Gentry, Grundy, Harrison, Henry, Holt, Howard, Jackson, Johnson, Lafayette, Linn, Livingston, Macon, Mercer, Miller, Moniteau, Morgan, Nodaway, Pettis, Platte, Putnam, Randolph, Ray, Saline, Schuyler, Sullivan, Vernon, and Worth.

Missouri Children's Advocacy Centers

- ▶ Children's Advocacy Services of Greater Saint Louis
- ▶ Rainbow House Regional Child Advocacy Center (Columbia)
- ▶ Child Safe of Central Missouri (Sedalia)
- ▶ North Central Missouri Children's Advocacy Center (Trenton)
- ▶ Voices of Courage CAC (St. Joseph)
- ▶ Synergy Services (North Kansas City)
- ▶ Child Protection Center (Kansas City)
- ▶ Children's Center of Southwest Missouri (Joplin, Butler, Monett, Nevada)
- ▶ Child Advocacy Center, Inc. (Springfield, West Plains)
- ▶ Kids' Harbor, Inc. (Osage Beach, St. Roberts)

Statewide Council on Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children

- ▶ Lakes Area CAC (Branson West)
- ▶ Ozark Foothills Child Advocacy Center (Poplar Bluff, Doniphan)
- ▶ Children's Advocacy Center of East Central Missouri (Festus, Farmington, Union)
- ▶ Southeast Missouri Network Against Sexual Violence (SEMO-NASV) (Cape Girardeau)
- ▶ The Child Advocacy Center of Northeast Missouri (Wentzville, Hannibal)

PART VII – CONCLUSION

Commercial sexual exploitation of children has emerged as a national and state concern that demands increased education, awareness, and collaborative action by state and local officials to safeguard children in the state of Missouri. Senate Bill 775, signed into law by Governor Mike Parson on June 30, 2022, established the Statewide Council on Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children. This report by the Statewide Council includes recommendations for priority actions and statutory changes as well as a recommendation for a renewed task force or Statewide Council within the Missouri Attorney General's Office.

According to data from the National Hotline, Missouri was the 7th highest in number of signal calls to the hotline with 1,103 signals received and 355 were from victims of those signals. From this data at least 240 cases were identified of trafficking victims with 327 total victims. Data from other sources shows large differences in the numbers of victims identified in Missouri. This shows that we must focus on a centralized uniform data collection repository and standard definitions of CSEC and Sex Trafficking.

The Statewide Council served to bring together many agencies from government and the private sector for ongoing and productive discussions about commercial sexual exploitation of children. Law enforcement, judiciary, DSS, Children's Division, DPS, AGO and elected officials as well as NGO's such as CAC's and others in the private sector who work with the victims all worked together to bring consensus and clarity to issues that must be addressed to minimize CSEC and protect our children.

With recommendations from the council a regional CSEC CAC plan was developed and funded for the 2024 fiscal year. Implementation is occurring and is recommended to be funded in ongoing years. Further scrutiny of State budgetary numbers and unallocated funds related to CSEC allowed for an \$900,000 increase in funding for CAC's helping these vital organizations who deal with CSEC related cases daily. The Statewide Council proposed the development of a CSEC program within the Children's Division that would include a leadership position and two support staff positions. The proposal and budget for the positions were included in the MO State 2024 DSS budget and it is recommended to continue for the 2025 Missouri State Budget. This created in the Children's Division the At-Risk Youth Program Coordinator who will oversee the Sex Trafficking Prevention Unit, along with two support staff positions to focus the effort in DSS around CSEC.

The work of the council, which by statute must be completed by December 31st 2023, will continue with a reinstituted Attorney Generals Task force to continue and expand upon the recommendations and actions already begun by the Statewide Council. Funding for this

Statewide Council on Sex Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children

expanded role by the AG's office and funding for education and awareness in a newly created fund is recommended for 2025 budget year.

In Missouri we believe that a victim-centered approach is the proper way to deal with the children whose lives are threatened by Commercial Sexual Exploitation. A victim-centered approach emphasizes the prioritization of victims' needs, interests, and wellbeing in the interactions with law enforcement, medical personnel or other professionals.

PART VIII- MEMBERS OF THE STATEWIDE COUNCIL

Chair: Representative Ed Lewis, District 6

Co-Chair: Representative Sarah Unsicker, District 91

Members:

Senator Angela Mosley, District 13

Senator Holly Thompson Rehder, District 27

Matt Rodriguez, Department of Social Services, Director's Office

Darrell Missey, Department of Social Services, Children's Division

Clifton Davis, Missouri Attorney General's Office

Connie Berhorst, Department of Public Safety, Office for Victims of Crime

Kim Davis, Missouri State Highway Patrol

Marcia Hazelhorst, Missouri Juvenile Justice Association

Nora Mosby, Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

Lisa Schulze, Missouri Department of Corrections

Jessica Seitz, Missouri Kids First

Catherine Vannier, Missouri Office of Prosecution Services

Mary Weir, Associate Circuit Judge in the 16th Judicial Circuit

Rikki Wright, Department of Mental Health

Amy Robins, Child Advocacy Center of Northeast Missouri

Jordan Hawkins, Missouri Coalition Against Trafficking & Exploitation

Sources

Gateway Alliance Against Human Trafficking. (2023). Human trafficking in Missouri's schools. Retrieved from <https://gahtmo.org/resources/>

Missouri Courts. (2023). Office of State Courts Administrator. Retrieved from <https://www.courts.mo.gov/>

Missouri State Highway Patrol. (2023). Criminal Justice Information Services. Retrieved from <https://showmecrime.mo.gov/CrimeReporting/CrimeReportingTOPS.html>

Polaris Project. (2020a). The 2019 Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act: A Topical Summary and Analysis of Four Bills. Retrieved from: <https://polarisproject.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/01/Polaris-TVPRA-2019-Analysis.pdf>

Polaris Project. (2020, July 29). Racial disparities, COVID-19, and human trafficking. Retrieved from: <https://polarisproject.org/blog/2020/07/racial-disparities-covid-19-andhuman-trafficking/>

Polaris (2022a). Polaris Analysis of 2021 Data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Retrieved from: <https://polarisproject.org/resources/us-national-human-trafficking-hotline-statistics/>

Polaris (2022b). Polaris Analysis of 2021 Data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline – Missouri. Retrieved from: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/statistics/missouri>

Polaris (2023a). National Human Trafficking Hotline – National Statistics. Retrieved from: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/statistics>
<https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/human-trafficking-statistics-by-state>

Polaris (2023b). National Human Trafficking Hotline – Federal Law. Retrieved from: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/human-trafficking/federal-law>

Polaris Project (2023c). National Human Trafficking Hotline – Human Trafficking. Retrieved from: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/human-trafficking>

Polaris Project (2023d). National Human Trafficking Hotline – Safety Planning. Retrieved from: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/safety-planning-information>